

## Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 SAJ-01

OMB-01 CU-02 /060 W

----- 108927

R 080845Z APR 76

FM AMEMBASSY TOKYO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8337

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

USLO PEKING

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

C O N F I D E N T I A L TOKYO 5200

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PGOV, TH, JA

SUBJ: JAPANESE REACTION TO THAI ELECTIONS

SUMMARY: FOLLOWING THAI POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS WITH STRONG INTEREST, JAPANESE FONOFF AND MEDIA CONCLUDE THAI ELECTIONS MOVED BANGKOK TO MORE CONSERVATIVE AND MORE "THAI" POLITICAL CONSENSUS. CONSOLIDATION TOWARD FEWER POLITICAL PARTIES IS REGARDED AS HEALTHY FOR THAILAND'S FRANGILE DEMOCRACY. DEFEAT OF FORMER PM KUKRIT, WHO WAS RESPECTED IN JAPAN FOR ADROITLY MANEUVERING THAILAND DURING A CRUCIAL PERIOD, IS THOUGHT TO HAVE RESULTED FROM HIS DECISION US BASES. SYMPAHTY IS WIDESPREAD FOR THAI DILEMMA OF ACCOMODATING HANOI'S DEMANDS AND GUARANTEEING THAI NATIONAL SECURITY. END SUMMARY.

1. MOST JAPANESE OBSERVERS SAW THAI ELECTIONS AS VICTORY FOR CONSERVATIVES AND MOVE TOWARD CENTER/RIGHT IN BANGKOK. DEFEAT OF FORMER PM KUKRIT, WHO HAD GAINED RESPECT OF JAPANESE, IS REGRETTEED AND SEEN AS PART OF REVERSAL OF GENERAL TURN LEFTWARD WHICH CHARACTERIZED  
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POLITICAL MOVEMENT IN THAILAND AFTER CAPTURE OF

INDOCHINA BY COMMUNISTS. FONOFF FIRST SE ASIA DEPDIR  
TSUKADA PROVIDED US FONOFF ASSESSMENT. FONOFF CORRECTLY  
PREDICTED COALESCING TOWARD HANDFUL OF MAJOR PARTIES  
AND WAS NOT SURPRISED THAT DEMOCRATIC PARTY ACHIEVED  
PREDOMINANCE. DEFEAT OF KUKRIT WAS A SURPRISE EVEN  
THOUGH THAT POSSIBILITY EXISTED. DECISION ON US BASES  
IS THOUGHT TO HAVE BEEN THE MAJOR FACTOR IN KUKRIT'S  
DEFEAT. IN LONG RUN, MOVEMENT TOWARD FEWER POLITICAL  
PARTIES SHOULD PROVIDE THAILAND GREATER POLITICAL  
STABILITY, BUT, IN FONOFF ASSESSMENT, SUBSTANTIAL  
POLITICAL INSTABILITY WILL CONTINUE TO CHARACTERIZE  
THE SITUATION IN THAILAND FOR AT LEAST MANY MONTHS.  
ELECTION RESULTS AND PROBABLE COMPOSITION OF NEW  
GOVERNMENT SHOULD PLEASE MILITARY WHERE GREATEST  
CONCERN ABOUT KUKRIT GOVERNMENT EXISTED. DISCONTENT  
AMONG LEFTISTS FORCES AND STUDENTS, HOWEVER, WILL  
PRESUMABLY INCREASE.

2. OVERALL DURING PAST YEAR, A DELICATE SHIFT HAS  
TRANSPIRED IN SENTIMENT AMONG THAI. RELATIONS  
WITH PEKING ARE NOW A SOURCE OF SATISFACTION TO BANGKOK  
BUT HOSTILITY IN HANOI AND VIENTIANE IN SPITE OF GOOD  
THAI INTENTIONS HAS LEFT THAIS SOBERED AND BEFUDDLED.  
AMBIVALENCE TOWARD TERMINATION OF US MILITARY PRESENCE  
AND BASES REFLECTS THIS CONFUSION.

3. ALTHOUGH SENI, WHO WILL PRESUMABLY BE PM, ADVOCATED  
LAST YEAR REMOVAL OF US BASES FROM THAILAND, THE SHIFT  
TOWARD A MORE CONSERVATIVE CONSENSUS IN THAILAND HAS  
CLEARLY ALSO AFFECTED SENI'S THINKING. FONOFF THINKS  
NEW RTG MAY WELL SEEK RENEGOTIATION ON BASES. US IS  
NOT EXPECTED TO RE-OPEN BASE ISSUE WITH THE THAIS,  
HOWEVER. IN ANY CASE, NEW GOVERNMENT SHOULD BE CLOSER  
TO THE US. JAPAN WILL CONTINUE TO TRY TO SUPPORT  
THAILAND, BOTH BILATERALLY AND THROUGH ASEAN.

4. JAPANESE INTEREST IN THAI DEVELOPMENTS AND THE  
ELECTION HAS BEEN CONSIDERABLE. TSUKADA SAID PM MIKI'S  
PRIVATE SECRETARY CONTACTED THE FONOFF AS SOON AS IT  
OPENED MONDAY SEEKING AN "INSTANT ANALYSIS." MEDIA  
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LIKEWISE HAS WATCHED THE ELECTION CLOSELY AND ALL  
MAJOR PAPERS DEVOTED EDITORIALS TO THE SUBJECT.  
PRESS FOLLOWED FONOFF LEAD IN ITS ASSESSMENT THAT LEFT  
HAD LOST AS THAILAND MOVED TO MORE CONSERVATIVE  
POSITION. SEVERAL PAPERS ANTICIPATED A REOPENING  
OF NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE US ON BASES. MAINICHI  
EXPRESSED VIEW THAT BECAUSE OF LEFT-CONSERVATIVE  
POLARIZATION, POLITICAL INSTABILITY WOULD CONTINUE.

MEDIA WAS SYMPATHETIC TO THAI DILEMMA OF ACCOMMODATING  
HANOI'S DEMANDS WHILE NOT THREATENING THAILAND'S  
NATIONAL SECURITY. DAILY YOMIURI, UNTYPICALLY,  
CAUTIONED THAT IF THE RTG WENT TOO FAR IN MEETING  
THAIMILITARY DESIRE TO RETAIN US MILITARY PRESENCE  
AND BY POLICING DISSIDENTS LEFTISTS WOULD GO UNDER-  
GROUND AND POSE A MORE SERIOUS LONG-TERM DANGER TO  
THAILAND. TENOR OF MOST EDITORIALS, THOUGH, AND  
FONOFF VIEW WAS THAT ELECTIONS WERE A SUCCESSFUL  
MILESTONE TOWARD DEFINING THAI NATIONAL INTERESTS  
AND REQUIREMENTS IN THE NEW SE ASIAN CONTEXT.  
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## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** X  
**Capture Date:** 01 JAN 1994  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** ELECTION RESULTS, FORM OF GOVERNMENT, GOVERNMENT REACTIONS  
**Control Number:** n/a  
**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Draft Date:** 08 APR 1976  
**Decaption Date:** 01 JAN 1960  
**Decaption Note:**  
**Disposition Action:** RELEASED  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Authority:** izenbei0  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 28 MAY 2004  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
**Disposition Reason:**  
**Disposition Remarks:**  
**Document Number:** 1976TOKYO05200  
**Document Source:** CORE  
**Document Unique ID:** 00  
**Drafter:** n/a  
**Enclosure:** n/a  
**Executive Order:** GS  
**Errors:** N/A  
**Film Number:** D760132-1117  
**From:** TOKYO  
**Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Image Path:**  
**ISecure:** 1  
**Legacy Key:** link1976/newtext/t19760481/aaaacqxy.tel  
**Line Count:** 127  
**Locator:** TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM  
**Office:** ACTION EA  
**Original Classification:** CONFIDENTIAL  
**Original Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Original Previous Classification:** n/a  
**Original Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Page Count:** 3  
**Previous Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Previous Classification:** CONFIDENTIAL  
**Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Reference:** n/a  
**Review Action:** RELEASED, APPROVED  
**Review Authority:** izenbei0  
**Review Comment:** n/a  
**Review Content Flags:**  
**Review Date:** 21 MAY 2004  
**Review Event:**  
**Review Exemptions:** n/a  
**Review History:** RELEASED <21 MAY 2004 by ElyME>; APPROVED <20 SEP 2004 by izenbei0>  
**Review Markings:**

Margaret P. Grafeld  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
04 MAY 2006

**Review Media Identifier:**  
**Review Referrals:** n/a  
**Review Release Date:** n/a  
**Review Release Event:** n/a  
**Review Transfer Date:**  
**Review Withdrawn Fields:** n/a  
**Secure:** OPEN  
**Status:** NATIVE  
**Subject:** JAPANESE REACTION TO THAI ELECTIONS SUMMARY: FOLLOWING THAI POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS WITH  
**TAGS:** PFOR, PGOV, TH, JA  
**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
**Markings:** Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006